

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the thorough review of the present application as evidenced by the Official Action. As discussed in detail below, independent claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 are amended to more definitely set forth the claimed invention and to further patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the cited references. In addition, dependent claims 2, 15 and 22 are amended to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicants regard as the invention. In light of the foregoing amendments and subsequent remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the present application.

A. The Rejection of Claim 2, 15 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph, is Overcome

The Official Action rejected claims 2, 15 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. In particular, the Official Action states that claims 2, 15 and 22 are indefinite as to whether pricing is based on the predefined profile only or a combination of the profile and other criteria. As described below, amended claims 2, 15 and 22 are now definite by stating that the pricing is based at least partially on the predefined profile.

Claims 2, 15 and 22 describe that a customer profile may be defined for a user, and a price for the defined meeting package may be based on the customer profile. To more clearly recite how the price for a meeting package is determined, claims 2, 15 and 22 are amended to recite that the price for a meeting package is at least partially based on the customer profile. Thus, the price for a meeting package may be based upon only the profile, such as an embodiment in which the profile contains the only prices that the user will pay. Alternatively, the price for a meeting package may be based upon the profile and other criteria, such as an embodiment in which the profile contains percentage discounts that the user receives off of the original price of the meeting package. See, for example, the explanation on the bottom portion of page 13 of the specification. Thus, amended claims 2, 15 and 22 now clearly recite how a customer profile may be utilized in determining a price for a defined meeting package.

Thus, Applicants submit that amended claims 2, 15, and 22 are acceptable and definite within 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and that the rejection of claims 2, 15, and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, is overcome.

B. The Rejection of Claims 1-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 is Overcome

The Official Action rejected claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by non-patent literature cited in Applicants' IDS: eventsource.com, plansoft.com and the Meeting News article by Cipriani (C1, C10 and C16, respectively). In addition, the Official Action rejected claims 1-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0032592 to Krasnick et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,324,517 to Bingham et al., and U.S. Patent No. 6,389,454 to Ralston et al. Based upon the amendments to claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 and the comments below, Applicants submit that the rejection of claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and the rejection of claims 1-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) are overcome.

The eventsource.com, plansoft.com, and Meeting News article by Cipriani each describe meeting planning systems that provide access to meeting site information and services over the Internet. As such, users, such as meeting planners, can enter a list of meeting site requirements via a web browser client application, and the requirements are used to query a database of meeting facility information to estimate costs of a meeting at several facilities satisfying all of the requirements. A description of the meeting sites and the estimated cost of conducting the meeting at each site are then returned for viewing by the user. To obtain the actual availability and pricing for a meeting site, however, the user must submit a request for proposal (RFP) to the meeting site(s). (See 2nd page, last sentence of last full paragraph of the Meeting News article by Cipriani; page 1, last sentence of 2nd paragraph, and pages 5 and 6 of the eventsource.com information; and pages 2 and 3 of the plansoft.com information). Although the cited references describe submitting the RFP electronically (i.e., "online RFP"), which decreases the transmittal time, a representative of the meeting site still must determine the actual availability of the meeting site and put together a proposal, which then must be transmitted to the user. Once the user receives the proposal, the user may have to further negotiate with the meeting site

representative regarding the pricing or other proposal detail. Thus, before the user can reserve one or more of the meeting sites returned to the user, the user must submit an RFP, the meeting site representative must return a proposal to the user, and the user and the meeting site representative must agree on the ultimate terms.

The Krasnick publication discloses a system for planning and managing meetings via a communications network, such as the Internet. The system collects specific criteria pertinent to a proposed meeting, then one or more software programs analyze the criteria, and executes various steps to schedule a meeting according to the criteria. (See the abstract and ¶¶ 6 and 20). The system provides various combinations of meeting planning services to clients, such as registration, research, online RFPs, meeting management, and report generation (see ¶ 25). Thus, the system provides the functionality for a meeting coordinator to develop, complete and submit an online RFP (see ¶ 32). In one embodiment, the meeting coordinator can access a hotel representative extranet where the coordinator can locate RFPs sent to the hotel, the status of each RFP, associated deadlines, and so forth (see ¶43). Therefore, again, before the user can reserve one or more of the meeting sites returned to the user, the user must submit an RFP, the meeting site representative must return a proposal to the user, and the user and the meeting site representative must agree on the ultimate terms.

The Bingham '517 patent describes a system for evaluating potential meeting or conference facilities based on an all-inclusive meeting cost so that meeting planners can compare total meeting cost at facilities with different characteristics and find the facilities that offer the most value (see the Abstract and Col. 2, lines 41-45). The meeting planner may then select the optimal facility for the upcoming meeting by using one or more of several online and off-line methods and tools, such as a standard electronic RFP (see Col. 7, lines 24-28). Thus, the Bingham '517 patent states that any method and tools may be used to reserve the selected facility and provides one specific example of using a standard electronic RFP.

The Ralston '454 patent discloses a system for scheduling appointments at multiple facilities, in which each facility has multiple areas equipped to provide services. The system receives client information, compares service data included in the client information with a set of service constraints, inputs the client information into a scheduling server, and generates a

predetermined number of appointment candidates, which are communicated to the client. An appointment is then generated based upon the client's selection of one of the appointment candidates. (See Col. 2, line 49 to Col. 3, line 1). For example, an embodiment in which one organization has 7 facilities and another organization has three facilities, scheduling information from both organizations may be accessed and an appointment may be scheduled based upon the availability of up to ten different facilities (Col. 7, lines 21-35). The system is applicable to any industry in which the scheduling of resources at a variety of locations is desired, such as the hotel industry in which guest rooms or meeting areas may be reserved among various hotels in a chain or the convention industry in which meeting areas within a geographic area hosting a particular convention may be reserved (see Col. 7, lines 36-45). Thus, the system of the Ralston '454 patent describes the steps undertaken to schedule one appointment from a variety of candidate appointments at various facilities, and states that the same type of system may be used to reserve guest rooms or meeting areas, but the system of the Ralston '454 patent describe neither the steps undertaken to schedule more than one type of appointment in the same transaction nor the steps undertaken to reserve guest rooms and meeting areas in the same transaction. To schedule more than one type of appointment or to reserve guest rooms and meeting areas utilizing the system of the Ralston '454 patent, a user would have to make separate requests and be presented with separate candidates for each type of appointment or reservation.

In contrast to the disclosures of the eventsource.com, plansoft.com and the Meeting News article by Cipriani (C1, C10 and C16, respectively) non-patent literature, the Krasnick publication, the Bingham '517 patent, and the Ralston '454 patent, amended independent claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 recite a method, two systems, and a network, respectively, in which a meeting package including a plurality of meeting facility resources and availability information regarding the meeting facility resources is defined. The plurality of meeting facility resources include at least a meeting room and a guest room. Thus, a user of the method, system and network of the claimed invention may immediately reserve a defined meeting package without undertaking any further steps. (See pages 11 and 12 of the specification and Figure 4). In particular, as further described on page 12 and 13 with respect to Figure 5, the availability of each of the meeting facility resources to be included in the meeting package definition is determined utilizing facility

inventory data, which may be real-time inventory data in some embodiments of the claimed invention, and a price for the defined meeting package is also generated. As such, the meeting package definition only contains meeting facility resources that are available, and, therefore, are immediately reservable. Thus, there is no need for the user to submit an RFP electronically or otherwise to obtain the actual availability and pricing for a meeting site because the information presented to the user in the meeting package definition is immediately reservable by a user. In addition, because the defined meeting package includes a meeting room and a guest room of a meeting facility, a meeting planner is capable of reserving all of the desired resources in one transaction, such that multiple transactions are not necessary.

While the eventsourcing.com, plansoft.com, Meeting News article by Cipriani, and Krasnick publication each describe meeting planning systems that provide access to meeting site information and services over the Internet, a user must submit a request for proposal (RFP) to a meeting site(s) to obtain the actual availability and pricing for the meeting site. Thus, the meeting site information provided to the user initially does not contain availability information, as now recited by amended claims 1, 14, 21, and 28. A user therefore cannot reserve a meeting site based solely on the initial information, but instead, the user must submit an RFP to begin the reservation process. Thus, the reservation process associated with the systems described by the eventsourcing.com, plansoft.com, Meeting News article by Cipriani, and Krasnick publication are much more involved and lengthy process than the reservation process of the claimed invention in which the availability information is included in the meeting package definition such that a user may immediately reserve the meeting package, as now recited by amended claims 1, 14, 21, and 28.

In addition, although the Bingham '517 patent describes a system for evaluating potential meeting or conference facilities based on an all-inclusive meeting cost so that meeting planners can compare total meeting cost at facilities with different characteristics and find the facilities that offer the most value (see the Abstract and Col. 2, lines 41-45), it does not disclose any specific method or tool for reserving the selected facility, let alone a reservation process in which the availability information is included in the meeting package definition such that a user may immediately reserve the meeting package, as now recited by amended claims 1, 14, 21, and 28.

Instead, the Bingham '517 patent states that any method and tools may be used to reserve the selected facility, and provides one specific example of using a standard electronic RFP.

Furthermore, while the system of the Ralston '454 patent describes the steps undertaken to schedule one appointment from a variety of candidate appointments at various facilities, and states that the same type of system may be used to reserve guest rooms or meeting areas, the system of the Ralston '454 patent does not describe reserving a defined meeting package that includes guest rooms and meeting areas of a meeting facility, as recited by amended claims 1, 14, 21, and 28. In particular, to schedule more than one type of appointment or to reserve guest rooms and meeting areas utilizing the system of the Ralston '454 patent, a user would have to make separate requests and be presented with separate candidates for each type of appointment or reservation.


For the forgoing reasons, neither the eventsource.com literature, plansoft.com literature, Meeting News article by Cipriani, Krasnick publication, Bingham '517 patent, nor the Ralston '454 patent teach or suggest defining a meeting package including a plurality of meeting facility resources and availability information regarding the meeting facility resources, in which the plurality of meeting facility resources include at least a meeting room and a guest room, as now recited by amended independent claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 or any of the claims that depend therefrom, namely claims 2-13, 15-20 and 22-27. Thus, the rejection of claims 1, 14, 21 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and the rejection of claims 1-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) are overcome.

CONCLUSION

In view of the remarks presented above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the present claims of the present application are in condition for immediate allowance. It is therefore respectfully requested that a Notice of Allowance be issued. The Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney to resolve any remaining issues in order to expedite examination of the present application.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

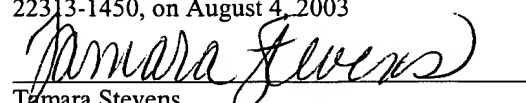
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